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Technical cooperation among developing countries

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HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE ON THE REVIEW
OF TECHNICAL COOPERATION AMONG
DEVELOPING COUNTRIES
Ninth session
New York, 30 May-2 June 1995

DRAFT REPORT OF THE HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE

Rapporteur: Mr. Francisco Javier BERGUIDO (Panama)

Addendum

III. REPORTS ON IMPLEMENTATION

A. Statement by the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme

1. In his opening statement, the Administrator of UNDP noted that considerable progress had been made in promoting technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC) as an instrument of multilateral cooperation, but much remained to be done to fulfil its potential.

2. The Administrator also noted the increasing globalization of production structures and the growing emphasis on the creation of a liberalized international trading regime, which had posed a number of challenges for the developing countries. Other factors such as greater reliance on market forces in preference to public intervention, the emergence of new States from the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the conflicts involving peace-keeping and humanitarian efforts had also imposed new and urgent tasks on the international community, with the consequent pressure to reallocate resources, in some cases from traditional development goals.

3. Those new developments had stimulated an increased interest by developing countries in TCDC and South-South cooperation in general, with a view to ensuring a more effective and equitable participation in that newly emerging structure of international relations.

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4. The Administrator stressed his belief that those considerations established the need to identify new and imaginative initiatives in order to ensure that TCDC continued to be relevant to developing countries in the changed circumstances of the 1990s and beyond. It was for that reason that the General Assembly, in its resolution 49/96 of 19 December 1994, had requested the High-level Committee to include in its agenda an item entitled "New directions for technical cooperation among developing countries".

5. In response to that request, the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries had prepared a comprehensive report on the subject, which recommended the adoption of a new substantive and operational policy thrust for TCDC in order to enable it to respond to current realities. The report emphasized strategic initiatives and closer integration between TCDC and economic cooperation among developing countries (ECDC). The strategic initiatives, however, should not be interpreted to mean that TCDC would not maintain its flexibility to respond to creative initiatives identified in the developing countries.

6. The Administrator stated that TCDC should not be seen as a substitute for traditional North-South development cooperation, but rather as a complementary effort. Strengthening the framework for multilateral development cooperation was needed, and TCDC must be seen as an integral part.

7. The Administrator noted that despite the tight budgetary situation of UNDP, it was important to strengthen the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries as a way to respond to the decisions on new directions likely to emerge from the deliberations of the High-level Committee.

8. The Administrator noted also that at the ministerial meeting of the Group of 77 in September 1994, which had been held during the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly, the Group of 77/UNDP Award for TCDC had been launched in order to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the Group and as a means to provide further incentive to the promotion of TCDC.

9. The Administrator concluded by noting that June 1995 marked the twentieth anniversary of the adoption by UNDP of the decision on a new direction, which emphasized the importance of integrating government execution and TCDC into UNDP-sponsored programmes and the symbolism of that event coinciding with the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations.

B. Highlights of progress reports

1. Introduction of reports by the Director of the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries

10. The Director of the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries submitted for consideration by the High-level Committee the report entitled "Review of the progress made in implementing the Buenos Aires Plan of Action and the decisions of the High-level Committee and implementation of the recommendations of the South Commission" (TCDC/9/2 and Corr.1); the report entitled "New directions for technical cooperation among developing countries

(TCDC/9/3); and the report entitled "Consideration of reports of the Bureau of the High-level Committee and the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (TCDC/9/4). Summaries of those documents, which served as the basis for the Committee's debate and its eventual decisions, are given below.

Review of progress made in implementing the Buenos Aires Plan of Action and the decisions of the High-level Committee and implementation of the recommendations of the South Commission Report

11. The report analyses information received from member Governments, organizations and agencies of the United Nations development system and selected intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations regarding activities undertaken to promote and apply TCDC during the period 1993-1994, and summarizes the emerging trends that appeared from the information provided.

12. Many countries reported that they had established national TCDC focal points, but that their activities were constrained by insufficient staff, financial resources, coordination within the Government and understanding of TCDC.

13. Some countries stated that they had not established a comprehensive national policy on TCDC, although the importance given to the issue was widely recognized.

14. A large number of Governments of developing countries indicated that TCDC featured prominently in bilateral exchanges in a number of areas, including technical, scientific, trade and educational cooperation.

15. Many countries undertook TCDC missions or arranged visits by TCDC national focal points to promote TCDC with some of them resulting in actual TCDC agreements.

16. On the issue of financing, the report indicated that a large number of reporting countries had made allocations for TCDC in their national budgets, some of them from their national indicative planning figures (IPFs).

17. Statistics on training activities, exchange of experts and equipment under TCDC arrangements provided an important criterion for measuring the extent of TCDC and indicated a broad range of involvement by developing countries.

18. While the developed countries reported very few cases of direct support for TCDC activities under bilateral aid programmes, some of the countries used training facilities in developing countries under their fellowship and training programmes.

19. The report noted a substantial increase in TCDC promotional activities supported by the United Nations system. Many of the organizations and agencies had assisted developing countries in organizing meetings, seminars, workshops, study tours, training programmes, the exchange of expertise and technology and the maintenance of databases.

20. UNDP, through its Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, utilizing special programme resources had played an active role in promoting and applying TCDC exchanges through a variety of modalities, such as matching exercises, subject-specific workshops, capacity enhancement, studies and evaluations, as well as promotional and sensitization programmes. In addition, the TCDC Information Referral Service database (TCDC-INRES) had continued to improve and simplify its presentation of data on institutional capacities in the developing countries and had moved to decentralize access to its information.

21. TCDC efforts had been supported by the various regional bureaux of UNDP, particularly under their regional programmes, utilizing an estimated $35 million during 1993-1994, including an estimated $5 million in resources allocated under the special programme resources.

22. The report indicated the importance given to the elements of the 1990 South Commission report, 1/ which emphasized policies in five areas: strengthening national commitment to South-South cooperation, the use of training and educational facilities in developing countries, the promotion of South-South trade, cooperation between enterprises in the South and the strengthening of food security.

New directions for technical cooperation among developing countries

23. The report on new directions for TCDC was prepared by the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries with the mandate provided by General Assembly resolution 49/96, requesting the High-level Committee to include the item in the agenda of its ninth session.

24. The report noted the significant changes in international relations that had taken place during recent years, especially during the 1980s, and pointed out that those changes had given TCDC great potential as an important instrument in realizing the aspirations of developing countries and as a means of ensuring their effective integration in the new global order.

25. The report recommended that, in the future, TCDC should adopt a more strategic focus by supporting initiatives in a number of high priority areas, such as trade and investment, debt, poverty alleviation, production and employment, macroeconomic policy coordination and aid management, which were likely to have a major impact on a large number of developing countries.

26. It also called upon a closer operational integration between TCDC and ECDC.

27. Other main recommendations included the need to identify pivotal countries to serve as catalysts for promoting and implementing TCDC, the promotion of triangular cooperation arrangements under which donors agreed to fund exchanges among developing countries, the identification of subject-specific TCDC products, the expansion of TCDC-INRES into a multidimensional database, including information on several relevant centres of excellence, expert services and project experiences, as well as supporting the already existing institutional capacities in the developing countries.

28. At the institutional level, emphasis was placed on the strengthening of national TCDC focal points, restructuring of capacities and needs-matching exercises and the adoption of clearly stated national TCDC policies.

29. The report suggested that the High-level Committee should continue to serve as the intergovernmental entity responsible for TCDC. It proposed that the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries be further strengthened in order to enable it to continue its role as coordinator for promotion and application of TCDC within the United Nations development system.

30. The report made specific recommendations, including consideration of a number of financing modalities in order to increase the allocation of resources for TCDC during the next programming cycle. It also recommended establishing links with non-governmental organizations and the private sector in order to provide a mechanism for their participation in TCDC activities.

31. A document entitled "Bandung framework for Asia-Africa cooperation: working together towards the twenty-first century" (TCDC/9/3/Add.1, annex, appendix), containing the conclusions of the recommendations of the Asia-Africa Forum held at Bandung, Indonesia, from 12 to 16 December 1994, was also considered.

Consideration of reports of the Bureau of the High-level Committee and the Administrator of UNDP

32. The report dealt with issues regarding the timing of future sessions of the High-level Committee, the implementation of guidelines for the review of policies and procedures of the United Nations development system on TCDC and organizational and supportive arrangements for TCDC.

33. On the issue of timing of future sessions of the High-level Committee, since most of the organizations of the United Nations development system operated on a calendar-year basis and their reports of the previous years were only available in March, it had proved difficult for the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries to include up-to-date information in its written reports to the High-level Committee. For that reason, at its eighth session, the High-level Committee had requested the Bureau to consider, on the advice of the Administrator, the possible adjustment of the timing of the High-level Committee in order to take account of that problem. However, having reviewed the various options, the Bureau and the Administrator had concluded that it would be preferable to maintain the current schedule of meetings of the High-level Committee, on the understanding that United Nations organizations could provide verbal updated reports to the High-level Committee in order to provide additional relevant information on their activities.

34. In terms of the implementation of the guidelines for the review of policies and procedures by the United Nations development system on TCDC and in pursuance of the decisions of the eighth session of the High-level Committee, a meeting of United Nations agency focal points had been held in July 1993. That meeting had decided that UNDP should emphasize a common system-wide definition of TCDC, a check-list of core policy elements, self-contained instructions of TCDC for staff and strengthening of internal systems for monitoring and review of TCDC.

35. On the question of supportive and organizational arrangements for TCDC, the report noted that because of the overall resource constraints, the special programme resources allocation for TCDC had been reduced by 30 per cent from the level of $15 million originally approved. For the period 1992-1996, the total resources available for the programme was $13.25 million, including $2.75 million carried over from the fourth cycle.

Notes

1/ New York University Press, 1990. For an overview and summary of the report, see A/45/810 and Corr.1, annex.